

Senor Presidente, the United States knows who our friends are, and your enduring friendship allows me—causes me to say, *muchas gracias*. Today, we have a relationship of unprecedented closeness and cooperation. By continuing to work together, we can improve the lives of the people in our two nations, in our hemisphere, and in our world.

Mr. President, I offer a toast to you, your gracious wife, and the great friendship between our two countries.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey. In his remarks, he referred to President Fox's wife, Marta Sahagun de Fox; and Gov. Fernando Canales of Nuevo Leon, Mexico. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address *March 23, 2002*

Good morning. This week I'm traveling in Latin America, visiting three strong American allies—Mexico, Peru, and El Salvador—to reaffirm the central importance I place on American relations with the rest of our hemisphere.

Our country's future is closely tied to the success and security of our closest neighbors. Problems like drug trade and poverty produce terrible consequences for all our countries, and prosperity in our hemisphere will produce profound benefits for all our countries. The United States is strongly committed to helping build an entire hemisphere that lives in liberty and trades in freedom.

The NAFTA trade agreement is a model for the world. NAFTA has created jobs and lifted lives in Mexico and Canada and the United States. During NAFTA's first 7 years, 15 million jobs were created in the United States. Our trade with Mexico now averages more than \$650 million a day. And that's why our border is one of the busiest in the world, and keeping trade and traffic moving freely is essential to America and American jobs.

Yet, we must also prevent our terrorist enemies from using the openness of our society against us. Even our welcoming country must be able to shut its doors to

terrorists and drugs and weapons at our own borders. So America, working closely with Canada and Mexico, has set a goal: We are working for a common border that is open to commerce and legitimate travel and closed to drug trafficking and terror. We want to speed the movement of legal goods and people across the border and stop the illegal movement of goods and people. And we will use the most up-to-date technology to achieve this goal.

This week I saw some of that technology at work on a visit to a border near El Paso, Texas. X-ray machines are being used to thoroughly screen cargo more efficiently than ever before.

During my visit to Mexico, President Fox and I announced an agreement to move toward a smart border between our countries. Through close cooperation and advanced technology, we'll make our shared border more open and more secure. We'll work with the Mexican Government to identify individuals who pose threats to North America before they arrive here. We will share technology to inspect traffic on cross-border rail lines and at major ports of entry. We will make sure that people with legitimate business who travel regularly across the border can cross easily, so border authorities can focus on greater

risks. And we will share information more quickly and efficiently with our Mexican friends.

America's border with Mexico is a region of tremendous economic vitality, and that must not change. Both our nations benefit from close ties of family and culture and commerce. Our new approach to strengthened border security will preserve that openness and increase the safety of our country. America will defend ourselves against new threats at the same time that

we build closer relationships with our neighbors.

Thank you all for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:04 p.m. on March 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With President Alejandro Toledo of Peru in Lima, Peru March 23, 2002

President Toledo. This is an historic visit made by a friend representing a country with which we have had a historical relationship. It is not a merely diplomatic visit; it is an official working visit. And we have touched on substantive issues which range from the open struggle against poverty, a war without quarter against terrorism and drug trafficking. I repeat, a war with no ambiguities whatsoever, against terrorism and drug trafficking. We've touched on issues of trade, education, even the Peace Corps.

But my friend George Bush, this Peru is a country that welcomes you with open arms. We are renewing our friendship, and this is the beginning of a new era in the relationship between Peru and the United States. And I'm extremely happy that the two of us are able to begin this relationship.

I know you seem younger than I am, but we are both 55 years old, and we have a long way ahead of us to work together. I know that we both have the energy and the stubbornness, particularly with regard to the issue of terrorism and drug trafficking, because your country, just like mine, loves peace. It appreciates life. And

we are united on this. And as of today, we have a strategic alliance of hope for the future.

My friend, welcome to my country.

President Bush. *Gracias, Senor Presidente.* It is an honor for me to be the first sitting President of the United States to visit Peru. I want to thank you for the invitation. It's a greater honor for Laura and me to come here as guests of a leader who symbolizes Peru's revitalization.

President Toledo and I have now met three times. At each meeting, I've been impressed by his commitment to democracy and his determination to improve the lives of the people of Peru. Peru is on the path toward greater freedom and greater prosperity, and America will be the partner in this progress, Mr. President.

Earlier today our two Governments signed an agreement that will reintroduce the Peace Corps to Peru, after an absence of nearly 30 years. The first volunteers will arrive in August, a symbol of the stronger ties between our people and the stronger relationship between our nations.